

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) prepared this *National Ignition Facility Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to the SSM PEIS* (DOE/EIS-0236-S1F) in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (40 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] 1502.5) and DOE's requirements for implementation of NEPA (10 CFR 1021.314). In addition, this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) was prepared in accordance with a Joint Stipulation and Order (JSO) approved and entered as an order of the court on October 27, 1997, in partial settlement of the lawsuit Civ. No. 97-936 (SS) (D.D.C), *Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) et al. v Richardson et al.* Paragraph 7 of the JSO provides that the SEIS shall evaluate the reasonably foreseeable significant adverse environmental impact of continuing to construct and of operating the National Ignition Facility (NIF) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) with respect to any potential or confirmed contamination in the area by hazardous, toxic, and/or radioactive materials.

On September 25, 1998, DOE announced in the *Federal Register* the agency's intent to prepare a SEIS (Volume I of this SEIS) for the NIF portion (Volume III, Appendix I) of the *Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Stockpile Stewardship and Management* (SSM PEIS) (DOE/EIS-0236, September 1996). This SEIS addresses potential and confirmed contamination in the seven site areas stipulated in the JSO; summarizes known contamination in the stipulated areas; summarizes information on the results of historical investigations, geophysical surveys, and soil and groundwater sampling to determine the potential for additional buried objects or wastes in the NIF area as defined in the JSO; and analyzes the environmental impacts of buried materials and the cleanup of any such materials, including effects on human health. DOE released the Draft SEIS to the public to obtain stakeholder comments and to consider such comments in the preparation of the final SEIS. In response to those comments, DOE prepared this Comment Response Document, which is Volume II of the SEIS.

### 1.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

DOE issued the Draft SEIS for public review and comment by mailings to stakeholders and by announcements in the *Federal Register* (FR) on November 5, 1999, via a DOE Notice of Availability (64 FR 60430) (Attachment 4 of Volume I) and an Amended Notice of Availability on November 12, 1999 (64 FR 61635) correcting a document title (Attachment 5 of Volume I). On the same date, public notices announcing the publication of the Draft SEIS and soliciting comments were also published in the *Tri-Valley Herald* and *The Oakland Tribune*. Copies of the Draft SEIS were initially mailed to 95 individuals and organizations (Section 7, Volume I). In all, a total of 220 Draft SEISs were distributed.

The comment period extended for 45 days from November 5, 1999, to December 20, 1999. Public comment meetings were held on Wednesday, December 1, 1999, in Washington,

D.C., and on Wednesday, December 8, 1999, in Livermore, California. Eight people registered their attendance at the Washington, D.C., meeting and 34 people registered their attendance at the two Livermore, California, meetings. Spoken comments were recorded by a court reporter at the public meetings, and transcripts were produced. Written comments were received as well. The format chosen included a presentation by the DOE NEPA Document Manager followed by a question and answer period. Following the question and answer period, commenters formally presented their comments on the SEIS. The transcripts of the comment meetings, written material handed in during the comment meetings, and letters and electronic mail received in response to the Notice of Availability are included in Section 3.

Comment documents were reviewed for their content and relevance to the environmental analyses contained in the SEIS. DOE read each comment document and identified statements related to the content and conclusions of the SEIS, including any stated preference for alternatives, and other comments on DOE or nuclear weapons programs. DOE considered both oral and written comments to evaluate the accuracy and adequacy of the Draft SEIS; to determine whether the text needed to be clarified, corrected, or revised; and to prepare written responses to address the public's concerns. DOE gave equal weight to spoken or written comments and to comments received during meetings, in the mail, or electronically. Comments were marked and numbered in the margins (see Section 3) so that they could be cross-referenced with the name and organization of the person making the comment and with DOE's responses to the comments. Following completion of the response to comments and revisions to the SEIS, DOE distributed both volumes of the Final SEIS to the individuals and organizations listed in Section 7 of Volume I.